



CHARIVARIA

IT was high time for a British statesman to get the diplomatic hot potato out of his mouth and treat Colonel Nasser to a little direct speech, making it clear that he cannot continue to bend us to his will with impunity. Those attending the annual dinner of the Metropolitan and South-Eastern Area of the Road Haulage Association rose from their places prouder men after Mr. Harold Watkinson had told them: "We have been able to show that the use of the Suez Canal is far less vital to us than many people thought a few months ago."

Manner Born

COLDLY denying reports that four Marine officers had been lost for



eighteen hours on Dartmoor during a "navigation course," a spokesman at their headquarters explained that they "had just lost their bearings because of mist." Conservative organizers are coldly denying rumours that they are after this spokesman to manage their post-by-election comment.

Present Laughter

NEVER since Caxton has the printed word had so much to offer. A moment's thought and a twopence-halfpenny stamp, and newspaper readers everywhere have been in reach of free food for life, permanent tax exemption, an all-found month in the Bahamas or similar expressions of the bounteousness of Fleet Street. Saturation point may, however, be near; less because all newspaper readers will soon be in possession of their personal pubs,

dream houses or unearned incomes in perpetuity than because the ideas-men behind the gift-schemes will have emptied the barrels of their inventiveness. Already, last week, some lack of dash and vision crept in. The *Sunday Express's* wearily reactionary "Choose a Mink—Win £1,000" had a dying air, and the *Daily Express* was plainly infected, with its must-be-won "Be in Paris when the Queen's There!" The *Mail*, muscle-bound by Olympian thinking, could only muster up a freely-carpeted home, at a miserable estimated value of £500, and the *Sketch's* competitions editor almost sank without trace with his offer of a free trip to watch Manchester United ("... and £5 spending money as well!"). The *Herald*, on the whole, flaunted the bravest banner, offering a "Lovely home" and (strictly in character—it's a working world) "Thriving store," in return for "the seven tunes that together would make up the best balanced, most entertaining programme for community singing." And in a special class for beginners the *News Chronicle*, surrendering at last the stubborn, pitiful illusion that if a paper is good enough people will buy it simply to read it, hurtled into the big time with an offer of ten free puppies.

Glittering Prize

SPECULATIONS about the future of Sir Hartley Shawcross tore into the



news like rockets; their explosion in the public consciousness made Hollywood publicity seem a mere murmur by comparison. Demanding of his week-end

readers "Where Does Sir Hartley Go from Here?" Mr. Woodrow Wyatt led all the rest in eulogy and prophecy. The "most articulate man in public life" would make "a profound impact on the life of Britain," was "more concerned with what happens to Britain than to him," would "attend the House of Commons more regularly," and "such is his power of oratory and his stature as a man that he might well transform the political scene." However, where Sir Hartley actually did go, as everyone knew next day, was to a post as company lawyer to a petroleum firm.

Might be Anything

It is reported that West Midlands miners have broken all production



records so far this year, but that nobody knows why. It could be "less absenteeism; fewer men drifting away to factories; streamlining of products; increased mechanization; or just that the men worked harder." This makes it terribly difficult for Union officials, who simply don't know where to throw their usual well-placed spanner.

Any Dummy Psychiatrists?

A SHORT New York dispatch discloses that a psychiatrist there is treating married women by supplying them with stacks of dishes to hurl at a dummy husband. The report has nothing about their reactions when they find that's all it was.

More Commercial Glamour

LONDONERS should not harbour the impression that the present attraction at Olympia is the only thing going on in

the field of marvels and display. A "Shirt Exhibition" in Liverpool advises visitors that

"The history of the collar through the ages is shown by thirty-six beautiful models from Pharaoh Rameses to Sir Winston Churchill."

Ratepayers in Disaster Saga

ESSEX County Council are to spend £3,500 on a lavishly illustrated book about the coastal flooding of four years



ago, with a detailed record of its after-effects. The last part is expected to give due prominence to the need to spend £3,500 on a book about it.

Cuckoo Also Ran

THIS year's meteorological precociousness is in evidence everywhere from premature blooms in the country to premature sun-glasses in the town—but nowhere more so than in the columns of *The Times*, which in giving a four-inch report about the Loch Ness Monster has got nearly six months ahead of itself into the sultry silly season of August.

Cakes, Ale, etc.

AN exhibition at Bridlington Public Library shows books mutilated, defaced, scribbled on, eaten by dogs and stuck together with egg. It is said to have attracted many more people than the ordinary shelves full of books carved up by critics.

Any Old Amenities?

THE King's Road car-mart causes Chelsea folk

To publicize their pangs of perturbation;

This eyesore, as they see it, much offends

The character of this old-world location.

Let them not be too anxious to provoke

A widespread outcry for its extirpation—

When it is gone the L.C.C. intends

To use the site for a new fire-station.

1945 AND ALL THAT

An extract from the forthcoming volume of Mr. Herbert Morrison's memoirs.

WHEN it became clear that the Labour Party had been returned to power—a victory for which a Fellow of Nuffield College and the Master of Pembroke have been kind enough to give me some of the credit—I realized that the moment had come when my long experience of practical affairs would be put to its most severe test.

I had no wish to intrude my advice where it was not wanted, but I took the precaution of telephoning Dalton, Bevin and Cripps, and letting them know that I was ready to accept even the most responsible office of State, if the King should offer it to me.

Their reactions were characteristic of each of them. My conversation with Dalton, as I recorded it at the time, went as follows:

M.: I'm afraid that if we get in I may have to undertake responsibilities of the heaviest nature.

D.: Yes, Herbert, you'll get what you deserve.

M.: Thank you, Hugh, and I'll see that you get what's coming to you.

This conversation worried me. For the first time I realized from what Dalton had said that some of my closest colleagues and friends were looking to

me as a possible leader of a Labour Government.

I talked next to Bevin, whom I always found throughout my public life to be a refreshingly candid friend. My conversation with him was, as I expected, most helpful:

B.: Oh! It's you, 'Erbert. What the 'ell are you up to?

M.: I was thinking it was a pity that you are not in a strong enough position to take over the leadership of the Government from Clem.

B.: And since I'm not, you, I suppose, think that you are?

M.: That had never occurred to me.

B.: Well, you've got another think coming to you.

It now seemed to me clear that there was a strong leaning towards making me the leader of the Labour Government, which, as the afternoon wore on, became more and more of a probability. I therefore telephoned Cripps and reported this fact to him. The conversation continued:

C.: The call, Herbert, must come not from outside but from inside you.

M.: That is where I think it is coming from. It's as though the whole of the rest of my life had been a preparation . . .

C.: I thought you would be able to say that.

I now felt certain that my duty was to make it known that I was ready to accept the burdens of leading the first Labour Government which had actually enjoyed power. So I made my last telephone call—the most difficult of them all—to Attlee and informed him of the support for me which I had discovered amongst our most senior colleagues. The rest of the conversation was brief:

A.: That is most interesting.

Later that evening Clement Attlee was summoned by the King to Buckingham Palace and invited to form a Government. All that I had worked for had come to pass, and the devious schemes of some of our colleagues to replace Clement Attlee by myself had been frustrated by the conventions of our democratic system.

H. F.





Cockburn's Aspects of English History

Introduction



It has been well said by a little-known leader of the Trades Union Congress that "the history of England is, essentially, the history of the rural, urban and suburban districts of the area with, it is scarcely necessary

to add, that of their inhabitants, existing under different conditions at different times."

This is sound doctrine, and the historian can only regret that the speaker did not amplify his statement by pointing out that such a definition must include islands fairly close to the coast. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that any attempt to "see" English history in the round, while neglecting the islands of Anglesey, Canvey, and Wight, is foredoomed to failure.



HUB OF EMPIRE

There were coloured cliffs at Alum Bay long before civilization, with its ideas, golf-courses, hopes and fears, was thought of, and rightly so. Dinosaurs may well have been there too. Mammoths, in a state of almost complete preservation, some of them with grass still in their mouths, have not been unearthed in the region. And their absence has averted—in a manner which many have found characteristic of the English genius—strife, controversy and internecine controversies about how this thing happened to them.

Siberia was less fortunate.

The point, moot in any case, does little or nothing to answer the questions

to which all history tends, or should tend, namely:

(a) How did we, non-mammoths, get where we are?

(b) Where do we suppose we are going?

The individual who is disposed to reply to question (a) that one may "search" him, and to question (b) "To hell in a handcart" is not viewing the situation in the light of the plenitude of modern knowledge—though, as any responsible historian must admit, the extent of knowledge is merely another way of expressing the extent of ignorance.

Those who, on the other hand, arbitrarily divide our history into the enclosure period, the disclosure period and the current foreclosure period, are underestimating the significance not only of the early Education Acts, the early Rent Restriction Acts, the early Defence of the Realm Acts and Toynbee's law, but also of the Taff Vale judgment, the Ebbw Vale judgment and—in the wider sense—Wales.

These were turning points. An historian may easily miss the significance of a couple of them—"sort of thing," as Professor Schlau of Chicago was wont to put it, "might happen to anyone"—but he who misses five in a row may well ask himself whether he might not be better occupied in some other form of gainful employment.

It is equally important for the student to realize that whereas until fairly recently it was known that whatever was supposed to have happened had not happened—at least not in that form—it is now known that it did happen after all.

The Black Death, for example, was not—as so many brought up in the old-fashioned public schools were taught to believe—a mild form of influenza grossly exaggerated by excitable chroniclers. It was the Black Death. The same is true of Druids. They were there, with altars, as had been originally supposed. People who sought to ease them off the historical map with a suggestion that they had become confused with another cult altogether have been forced to withdraw unreservedly.

There are, of course, variations

between their behaviour-patterns and our own. We do not, for example, cut the throats of maidens on rock-altars at sun-up on midsummer's day. They did. It is an essential difference in pattern. On the other hand, though one may sympathize with those who argue that the Druid clergy "got results," whereas pews are empty in many a modern church, this is not the whole story. Some historians hold that the Druids were—to use a neologism—"feather-bedded" by the Celtic State to a degree which a curate of our day might envy.

The point which more nearly concerns us of mid-twentieth-century England is that they were, as Shiva underlines in his "Sea-surroundedness as a Factor in Folk-environmental Development," already "group-identified." Their "action-formulae" were well established, though in a mould different from those of—say—a Rotarian or Treasury official of the present day. History is, after all, not so much a thing as a process—a fact sufficiently indicated by such dynamic events as the rise of nationalism, the rise of capitalism, the





rise of communism, the rise of the Labour Party and the rise—no less remarkable in its quiet way—in the cost of living.

"Things seem to be looking up all round," the late Lord Balfour is reported to have observed in his inimitable fashion when they brought him the news.

It will be necessary to consider in later chapters the fairly long period between the disestablishment of the Druids (many of whom were, in any case, Irish and had ceased to command popular confidence) and the year of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Nor did what may properly be called "English history" stop there. On the contrary, its development can be traced in clear line through the Early Days of Motoring, the Early Closing Act, right up to Earl Attlee.

The position of the villeins, the incidence of quit-rents, feifs, and the Elizabethan Age are all relevant to what came after. The period is a difficult one, partly because so many of its records are written in language almost unintelligible to the modern reader. Also wars, some of them even civil, often held up the ordinary development of social, and what later came to be termed "economic" life. We must also, in fairness to the period, take into account the fact that almost everyone was either somewhat drunk most of the

time or sickening for a bad case of typhus.

It was not until the *Encyclopædia Britannica* drew attention to the composition of such liquors as mead, mulsum and metheglin (a cocktail made of fermented honey and wine, spiced with Welsh drugs, and strong enough to blow the top of the average villein's head off) that there began to be any true understanding of what they were all up against.

Fleibitz, of the University of Michigan, in his "Reconstruction of Alcohol-intake Patterns of the Middle English," estimates that the liquor Queen Elizabeth took daily with her breakfast steak alone was the alcoholic equivalent of a half-bottle of any good brand of whisky.

The alternative for one and all was to quaff badly infected water. And this was the case not only at breakfast but at the mid-morning break, at lunch, at afternoon mead, and at dinner. Naturally most people preferred to be permanently pickled in wine, mead or other powerful liquors.

This explains much that at one time brought the period into disrepute. In the circumstances no one could be seriously censured for being drunk in charge of a war horse, galleon, or the Privy Purse. And if Shakespeare (another case, incidentally, of someone who is now thought to have really

happened instead of being an Italian monk in the service of the Earl of Leicester) often wrote a lot of highfalutin nonsense, this was due simply to something he drank.

The whole situation admirably illustrates a major difficulty of the historian which must always be that of maintaining an objective balance, trying not to imply—even in a footnote—that one thing is worse than another.

Professor Zenkoroff, of the University of Kansas, once confessed, in a personal letter to a friend, that he "hated the guts of the thirteenth century." He said he would "get the goods on it if it's the last thing I do." He added that were he not convinced that the facts were enough to damn the thing anyway he would be tempted to "slip a little something into the record."

Even in a public lecture, when asked by a student a question about Simon de Montfort, he permitted himself to reply "Listen, you want to know something about that so-and-so? All right, so I'll tell you, but it isn't going to be pretty."

Such an attitude in a distinguished scholar must be deplored, the more so as it is not uncommon. The nineteenth century suffered from it for a good many years after it was over, and was thus precluded from defending itself. The attacks, though, for this reason in the worst possible taste, found a certain justification in the reckless overproduction of Tennyson and unpleasant incidents towards the close, such as the Tranby Croft case.

Even the twentieth century has not always escaped the ill-natured jibes of men who may truly be said to be "friends of every century but their own."



With Illustrations, Too

By R. G. G. PRICE



THE newspaper serial, when it is not a potted preview of a best-seller, is developing into a distinct sub-species of fiction. As the wind veers so does outspokenness vary. Some weeks one can see the panic cuts. Because the faraway and the long ago are less likely to attract the police than the here and now, the Sunday cliff-hanger is often either historical or geographical. Sometimes it is really quite educational, one way and another. A close examination of real serials might lead to trouble; so an odd instalment from a possible serial will have to do instead.

FLORA

New Readers Begin Here: MUNGO PARK, after forcing his way through the sweat-glades of the Niger and often wishing that he was back at his Scottish school, tawse and all, hears a rumour of an African tribe that is ruled by two white girls called LESLEY and FRANCES. On his way to find them he meets the villainous slave-trader, CAPTAIN HARRIS, a deserter from His Majesty's Guards after the battle of Yorktown and famed in Africa for his methods of enforcing discipline. Rumours of a certain General Bonaparte have set the tribes in a ferment, shown by the never-ceasing sound of human sacrifices. MUNGO PARK shoots a giant gorilla and finds in the cage that it guards a girl from his hometown clad only in a turban. N'G, chief of the treacherous M'N tribe, offers to guide MUNGO PARK, not telling him that the path lies athwart a grove of girl-eating orchids. LADY EUPHEMIA DE VERE, once a beauty at the Court of Le Roi Louis XV, has taught N'G how to break prisoners on the wheel. *Now read on:*

A kindly smile came to the lips of Mungo Park as he surveyed the broad savannah stretching before him, where the sun gilded the palms and turned to molten gold a herd of okapi, the rare, deer-like creature that was to remain long unknown to Europe, though it was rumoured that the great Linnæus had already classified it.

Suddenly a frown came into his eyes. How could he have forgotten Flora's plight? It had been yesterday when he slew her captor and still the problem of equipping her with raiment had not been dealt with. "Pish upon the lassie,"

he murmured humorously. Well, the best he could do would be to lend her his surcoat; but alas! that, and a small drum, were all he could spare. However, she was no taller than he and it would have to serve. Perhaps later she would be able to tailor herself a skirt or at least a pair of inexpressibles.

A shower of spears reminded him that the expedition was still far from home. At his crisp orders his bearers repulsed the attack and the enemy fled, leaving one captive in their hands. Mungo Park was no softling. He had grown up in a land where the slightest misdemeanour was punished with the greatest savagery. He had often walked with his sweethearts among the gibbets; but he knew the fate that awaited the captive and walked away stopping his ears. Captain Harris, however, grinned expectantly and rallied him for being a lily-livered Scot.

"Where's the girl, Park?"

"If you refer to Miss Mackintosh, sir, she is recovering from the terrors of her captivity in her hut."

Captain Harris laughed coarsely and with a meaning leer swaggered off; as he knocked on the bamboo curtain, a distant scream told him that the prisoner's end was in progress.

With the break-up of the First Coalition the outlook in Europe was black for Great Britain. The Treaty of Basle had quietened Prussia, and the British forces, shattered between the Maas and the Yssel, were shipped home, ignominiously, from Bremen. The news had not reached this remote corner of Africa. As Mungo Park's party battled through the jungle, from time to time losing one of their number to the lithe, whiplash black mambas, to the giant poison puff-balls, to the impaling rhinoceri, Flora's attention was fully concentrated on showing Mungo Park how to swing from tree to tree. As he stood looking up at her demonstration, she was hard put to it to hold the ends of the surcoat in place.

Captain Harris, meanwhile, was driving a hard bargain with N'G.

"I will pay you five milky-maidens from the Somali uplands, five active





boys and a eunuch as soon as you have carried out my behest."

"Terrible would our fate be were we to fail, Great White Father."

"Terrible will your fate be if you leave my behest uncarried out."

He slashed his buckskins moodily, muttering to himself "Zounds, the animal is rapacious." Then an even more evil smile than usual glinted beneath his cruel upper lip and he leant forward to speak softly to the Chief.

Among the M'N tribe it was the Festival of the Blood Moon. All day the drums had been beating ever more intoxicating rhythms. Strange brews were concocted by the witch-doctors. Among the M'Ns the post of witch-doctor is hereditary. He is not merely a magician but is the counsellor of the Chief, the physician of the tribe and often the most intelligent member of the community.

The M'N tribe practised exogamy, matrilineal succession and the cultivation of sweet corn. The Uncle's Cousin had the right of the growing boy's allegiance in war. Soon, any moment now, the puberty ceremonies would begin. From the chieftainesses' hut Lesley and Frances stepped with slow, feline grace towards the centre of the sacred circle, carrying sharp blades on the end of thin bamboos. With lazy

avidity they accepted the sip of fire proffered by the presiding witch-doctor.

The approaching caravan was fully expected. As it debouched into the village Flora was suddenly seized by N'G's men; but a giant gorilla, in response to an order given with a grim chuckle by the chieftainesses, pulled at her too. Captain Harris, sharing a litter with Lady Euphemia, who was drawing him oubliettes, entered from the other end of the clearing. Suddenly Mungo Park found himself bound captive at the moment he saw the buttons of his surcoat give way.

(Next week: Ordeal By Ant)

"Film-director Otto Preminger spread his hands in front of the small, delicate face of Jean Seberg . . . 'Forget who you are and what you were,' he commanded. 'From now on you are a soldier and a saint. You must be Joan of Arc.' . . . That was the climax to the day that may change Jean Seberg, a little girl from Iowa, U.S.A., into a film star . . . She was facing the cameras for the first time in the film *Saint Joan* . . . 3 p.m.—Preminger says: 'We'll shoot now . . . Her first line before a camera. And after five attempts she gets it right. She is a film actress . . .'"

Daily Express

Not after getting her line right after only five attempts, she's not.

Simple Superiority

MEAN men who handle tools,
Wage-slave and mug and clot,
Mild men on office stools,
Down-trodden men who trot
Off tubwards on the dot—
Their reading seldom climbs
Much above merest rot.
Top people take *The Times*.

Some simply check their pools,
Some like their stories hot,
Strange scenes in private schools,
Peer's son discovered shot,
Blonde model dead in yacht,
Dean charged with dockland crimes—
These, I regret, are not
Top people. Take *The Times*,

Though, and by all the rules
You too should soon have got
More status: even fools
Gain stature on the spot,
Get in and scoop the pot,
Like men in pantomimes,
Merely by taking what
Top people take—*The Times*.

Prints of our native plot,
Unculture's paradigms,
How right that of the lot
Top people take *The Times*.

P. M. HUBBARD

Surplus to Requirements

By H. F. ELLIS

NOTHING in *The Times* Personal Column—nothing, at any rate, since that offer of “paving stones associated with the poet Shelley” about five years ago—has interested me more than this:

CANNONS, genuine 4½ Bore C.I. Muzzle Loading on Teak carriage and wheels 8cwt. each in excellent condition, some surplus to requirements, at Historical Manor House, exceptional opportunity to purchase one or two reasonably.—Write Box M.454, *The Times*, E.C.4.

Four pounds ten that cost, plus one shilling to cover Box fee and postage of replies, and that is not a sum to be lightly cast away. The inference is that the advertiser has good hopes of doing a deal. Myself, I think that he will fail.

This gloomy view is not based on any extensive knowledge of the cannon market. It does indeed seem probable, at a time when stately homes are breaking up so fast, that there may be

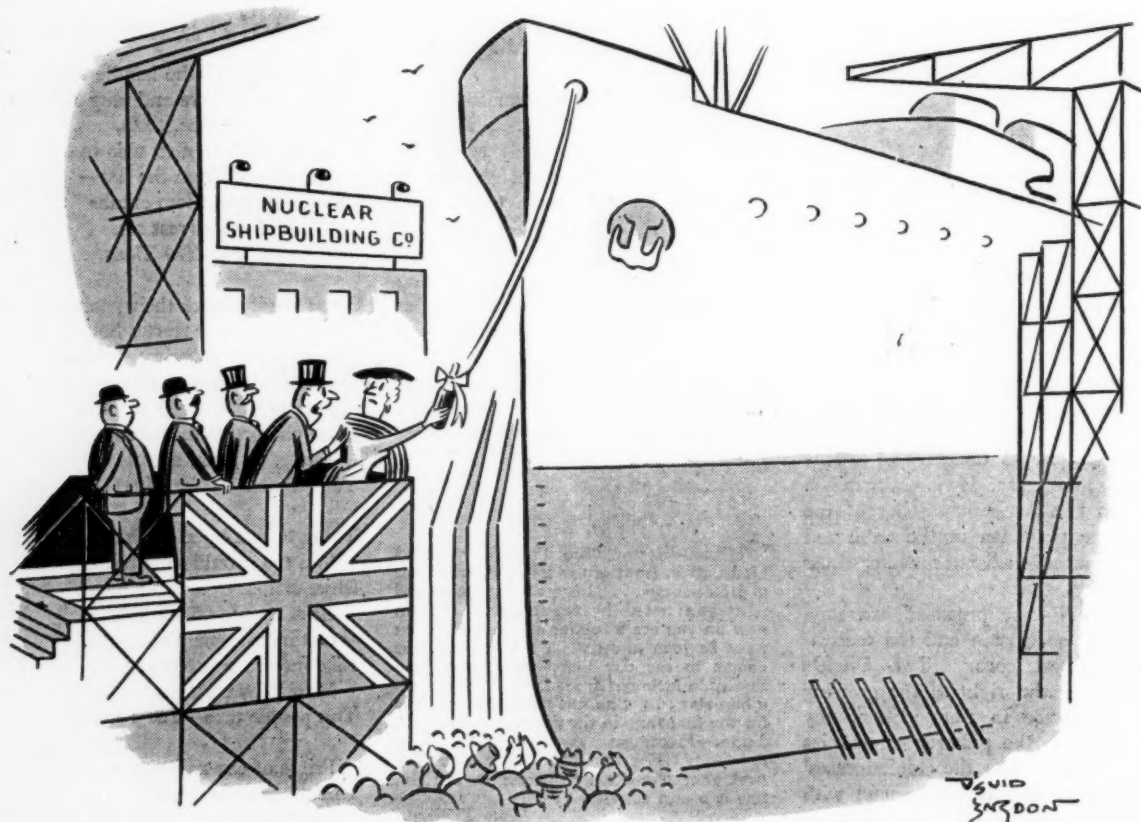
something of a glut. But that is not the point. What makes me despondent about the chances of Box M.454 is his utter ignorance of the proper way to plug what must be, at best, a rather sticky line.

No, on second thoughts, not utter. One must be fair. The phrase “exceptional opportunity” shows that there are glimmerings, faint intimations of the basic principle that, if you want to get rid of something that nobody else can conceivably need, you must first convince the customer that he will kick himself for the rest of his life if he lets this chance slip by. But it is no more than a glimmer. The undertones of the word “exceptional,” with its suggestion that genuine cannons are pretty hard to come by, are too faintly heard to fire the ordinary householder to positive action. Compare, for effect, the very much

stronger (though still far from compulsive) “At last!”

AT LAST! Genuine 4½ Bore C.I. Muzzle Loading CANNONS on Teak carriage and wheels, etc., etc.

This is coming nearer, is it not? Reword the item thus, and here and there a reader might swallow the implication that this is what, perhaps unknowingly, he has so long and so impatiently been waiting for. The drawback is that this particular approach has been just the teeny-weeniest bit overdone. Like myxomatosis, it has set up a resistant strain, and frankly I wouldn't trust it to sell so much as a truncheon. What is wanted here is an altogether gentler, more subtle technique, a policy of gradualness. Anyone with any experience of trying to push the less immediately attractive lines (draw-bridges, follies, stuffed birds and so on)



“Not too hard, dear.”



"Ink!"

knows that it is a mistake to introduce the product until the subject has been properly softened up. To kick off, in capitals, with the very thing that nobody wants is simply to invite the reader to skip incontinently to the next item. Suppose, instead, we begin:

HIDE those unsightly Bare Patches on either side of your Portico . . .

Observe, before we go any further with this, just what is happening here. The reader is impelled, before he has any clear idea of what is cooking, to think about the spaces on either side of his front door. He has never, very likely, thought about them before. Didn't know he had them, in all probability. But now he comes to consider them they certainly *are* rather bare. Perhaps people are beginning to talk. He has no notion as yet what means of hiding them are about to be proposed to him—hydrangeas in tubs? rustic seats?—but he is wide open to suggestions.

HIDE those unsightly Bare Patches on either side of your Portico. Exceptional opportunity occurs to purchase reasonably one or two CANNONS, genuine 4½ Bore C.I. Muzzle Loading on Teak carriage . . .

Cannons! Of course. The wonder is he didn't think of it before.

The danger is that, being a reader of *The Times*, he probably did. Top people, as the saying is, have Teak carriages. And this danger inclines me to believe that the advertisement has been inserted

in the wrong paper. The real market for genuine cannon lies not among those who already have more than they can well, in this crazy modern world, maintain in excellent condition but among the readers of, let us say, the small ads in the *Evening Standard*—forward-looking men and women in the suburbs with an urge to outdo the Joneses. To meet this need, a little further rephrasing will be desirable.

GARDEN ORNAMENTS

SNIP! Ideal for rockery or to set off that new porch. Gent, ex-P.S., offers gen. Cannons 4½ C.I. M.L. teak carr. 8 cwt. Ex. cond. Owner giving up. Reasonable.

This, not to beat about the bush, is beautifully conceived. Something useful, decorative, not too exp. A touch of class. Some techn. abbrevs. to appeal

to the modern go-ahead man. And then the crowning "Owner giving up." Beaten in the race to get on and keep up. Forced to surrender the very symbols of his standing to a better man. The weakest must go to the wall, and the landmarks their fathers set up be trundled away to do honour to the newly-appointed Branch Manager. One does not like to profit by another's misfortunes, but who can resist the opp., the excep. opp., to step into the shoes of an ex-P.S. man who has failed to make the grade? "Surplus to requirements" my foot!

I do not hesitate to describe the advertisement, as it now stands, as irresistible. Cast iron. Or—as we say up at the Manor House—C.I.

A Qualified Lament

IN the whole of Britain there are none who fashion it still,

The delicate, elegant, aristocratic quill.
Bishops and bankers, statesmen and sages and scholars,
If they want such a thing, must pay Canadian dollars.

The swan's white pinion, acknowledged king of its kind,
Has become, it seems, exceedingly hard to find;
The white goose feather and the turkey splendid in stripes,
Rejected of writers, clean the vile stems of pipes.

The scratch of the quills is quieted. Over all
Is the dingy, characterless trail of the inky ball.
Who pens a threnody? Well, to be perfectly candid,
Not I, for one. I happen to write left-handed.

R. H. YOUNG

Soliciting Gentlemen

By GEOFFREY LINCOLN

WHETHER you like it or not you can't get very far these days in a successful career at the Bar without getting to know a good many of what an excited lady barrister in the Middle Temple always calls "soliciting gentlemen." As a rule it is useless to hope for briefs from any more direct source than solicitors or their clerks. It's no good, nowadays, rushing up with any sort of printed card to people knocked over in the street or about to be unfaithful to their wives and expecting to be handed immediately a set of papers neatly tied up with red tape. Anyway, in those circumstances no one carries an adequate supply of red tape.

Your early and very own briefs are

likely to come to you from a solicitor's managing clerk: they might come to you from the solicitor himself, if he happened to be your father or your wife, but apart from any such favourable relationship it is the clerks you will meet in the first place. On the whole solicitors' clerks fall into two main categories, and if you want to keep them pouring out briefs you must cultivate a distinct approach to each. There are:

The Old School: The solicitor's clerk of the old school approaches each case very slowly and usually about ten minutes after it has begun. This is because his rate of progress down the corridors of the Law Courts is impeded by his enormous overcoat, each pocket of which is stuffed with writs, subpœnas

and affidavits and copies of the *Poultry World*; by his feet, which are agony; by his rupture; and by the fact that, as he is never tired of telling you, he will never see seventy again. (Show enormous unbelief, even if you'd always taken him for a bad eighty-four.) You call him "Mr. Boot," never "Boot" or "Tim." Mr. Boot is no actual assistance in the doing of cases: for one thing he never seems to have filed the right papers in his overcoat. His instructions mainly consist of two short lines on the back of an old lease. "I trust you may forgive," he pants, "a brief that is somewhat brief." This play on words always does for Mr. Boot, who is still panting noisily for breath when the Judge comes into court.

After lunch Mr. Boot smells gently of draught stout and falls asleep. He then is no trouble and is even glad, on waking, if he finds you've won. Judges like to see old Boot sleeping behind you, and he is surprisingly good with actresses getting divorced. He pats their hands and calls them "Girlie," and they often kiss him when it is all over. You'll get on fine with Mr. Boot, provided you always remember to ask after his operation.

The New School: Typical of the younger managing clerk is Mr. Eager, who has horn-rimmed glasses, a blue suit and a button to show that he is something to do with World Peace. Over coffee in the crypt of the Law Courts he tells you that he has three sons with scholarships and a wife who is being psycho-analysed on the National Health. All this, however, leaves Mr. Eager far too much time for keeping abreast of the law. "It seems to us," his instructions in some trifling County Court case will begin, "that under rule XXIII sub rule xiv and Sparkish v. The



"Gentlemen, disquieting reports of snow-blindness are coming in from all over the country."

NEXT WEEK'S PUNCH

will contain the twelfth of
RONALD SEARLE'S

"Heroes of our Time":

a portrait of

LORD RUSSELL



"No more for me, thanks—I'm pushing."

Southern Cereal Cannery *ex parte* Mungo, counsel will easily get the defendant sent to prison, made bankrupt and obtain a confiscation order *à prendre* of his television set." At first you may be tempted to look up all this nonsense. Later you will learn to do Mr. Eager's cases exactly as you do Mr. Boot's, but in a more bitter, hectoring tone of voice. You will also grow to dread the way he snarls "Now's your chance, sir. Shoot them down in flames," every time you rise uncertainly to your feet. However, you will get used to Mr. Eager. If he asks you to do anything too cunning silence him with a cold look and "Mrs. Eager no better these days, I suppose?"

If there are two main types of solicitors' clerks there are many more varieties of solicitors. As they sometimes stroll down to the Law Courts to watch you doing their cases it is as well to be able to spot the type. You will encounter:

The Distinguished Solicitor: He will come, grey-haired and purring, slowly into view, his deaf aid neatly coiled, and say, just as you come out of one of his most troublesome cases, "Really, don't you find all this litigation unbearably sordid?" The only thing to do is to

smile ruefully and pull the forelock of your wig from the pigsty as he purrs back to Lincoln's Inn to fiddle the death duties of some duke.

The Bright Young Solicitor: He's the one with the curly bowler hat who likes you to call him Julian. His clients are pretty girls he met in Belgravia and have names like Melissand. "Melissand's husband always wanted her to wear gum boots, she thinks he had a thing about firemen. I suppose," his instructions go on wistfully, "you Bar chaps run into that sort of thing every day." Cultivate Julian; he gives little barbecues in Pelham Crescent for all his friends whose marriages are breaking up. He'll be a Distinguished Solicitor himself one day.

The Undistinguished Solicitor: He has a macintosh and a one-man business in the Mile End Road and you'll have to do everything for him, from taking a statement from his client to drafting his affidavit of documents. There's only one rule in dealing with him: never let him guess you can't draft an affidavit of documents either.

The Ordinary Solicitor: In writing an opinion for any solicitor, particularly if he's forgotten to see any of the

witnesses and lost all the original documents, always begin: "I have been much assisted in this case by the full and lucid instructions of my solicitor." After the most simple, foolproof, undefended divorce case always say to the lucky divorcée, making sure your solicitor is still hovering around her, "This case could not possibly have succeeded without brilliant preparation in your solicitor's office." These rules can be applied to any solicitor; but one of the most engaging discoveries you make at the Bar is that there are ordinary solicitors, people like you, with wives and children and overdrafts and a mistrust of the law. You can have dinner with each other once a month and bore your respective wives to extinction by talking of that remarkable Probate action you almost pulled off. You can grow to like each other and form a real and fascinating alliance against an indifferent and only reluctantly litigious world.

For sale, Gas Cooker (Main), good Condition. £5—Apply 3798 News Newington.—*Edinburgh Evening News*
We have one, thanks.

La Mort de l'Alcoolisme

By ERIC KEOWN

AFTER four years, Paris seemed to stand much where it had. Our taximan made a front-bench speech about the price of petrol, and between Le Bourget and the Palais Royal committed verbal murder on three innocent lorry-drivers. We unpacked quickly and strolled round the corner for a stabilizer. The sun shone. Our cherished bistro looked as bright, as gay, as multitudinously bottled as even in our recent dreams.

"Two cognacs-siphons," we said. "With ice."

The patron gave a strangled whistle. Then he leaned over the zinc and pointed to the front of the bar, on which was emblazoned in large white letters:

LE JUS DE FRUIT CONTIENT DES
ÉLÉMENTS MINÉRAUX INDISPENSABLES À
NOTRE VITALITÉ—CHAUX, MAGNÉSIE ET
SURTOUT POTASSE, STIMULANT DU CŒUR!

"Sa cellulose favorise le bon fonctionnement de l'intestin," he added helpfully. "How about a refreshing sirop de calabre?"



"We asked," we declared a little crossly, "for two cognacs-siphons."

Astonishment gripped his seasoned features. He swept his arm around his shelves, and stunned as we were by frustration and fatigue it took some moments to grasp that almost everything that grows on trees had been systematically squashed for the hard-bitten clients of the *Deux Asticot's*. The labels proclaimed proudly that not the most shadowy kick remained in a single bottle.

"You are old friends," said the patron gently. "You would not have me sell poison?"

Poor fellow, he had been in full possession of his wits when we had last seen him. Brushing past three elderly workmen who were frenziedly attacking a litre bottle of fizzy lemonade, we stumbled out and made for our café on the square. Jean-Louis, we thought, would have a good laugh about this, Jean-Louis who had grown bent in the service of the grape. But when he came out to our table somehow he looked as if lately he had passed through some great crisis of the spirit, though his handshake was as warm as ever.

"Two cognacs-siphons," we demanded firmly.

The old waiter steadied himself against the table.

"L'alcool," he announced with conviction, "*est un meurtrier en liberté, qui nous coûte cher.*"

We pointed out that what we awaited feverishly was a drink and not a philosophical argument.

"Ecoutez, messieurs. L'alcool est une sorte de condiment comme le poivre ou la moutarde. Que penserions-nous d'un individu qui ingurgiterait plusieurs pots de moutarde au cours de sa journée?"

A certain desperation overtook us. As a glossy car drew into the pavement and disgorged an excessively well-dressed young man, we saw that on the rear window was a long sticker shouting in red capitals "SANTÉ! SOBRIÉTÉ!"

"A glass of pure milk?" Jean-Louis suggested. "*Nous avons un très bon lait scrupuleusement homogénéisé et dégraissé.*"

"Look," we said, "we're tired of this new game, and we're tired anyway. Bring us two cognacs-siphons." But he had begun a passable impersonation of

a minor prophet, his eyes staring, his arms waving.

"*Figurez-vous, mes braves,*" he mumbled. "*Envie de vomir au réveil. Yeux un peu jaunes. Mains tremblantes. Crampes dans les mollets. Foie sensible au toucher. Mémoire et volonté défaillantes. Troubles du caractère. Irritabilité, violence—*"

"Come off it, Jean-Louis!"

"—*jalousie, cauchemars, inquiétude, anxiété, dépression, sénilité précoce—*"

But by now we were in a taxi, heading for the island. Whatever strange cataclysm had hit France, Madeleine wouldn't let us down. In the cellar of the *Pierre* was enough burgundy to flood the Seine.

Our favourite table was free. Madeleine did all but kiss us. A friendly intimation of *escalope en papillote* came lightly through the swing door from the kitchen. Outside the pigeons cooed and hope rose.

At the next table two thick-set men, obviously floating high on expenses,



were putting the finishing touches to their plans for an enormous lunch. Only the wines remained unordered. And then hope fell to zero.

"Bring me the *carte des eaux*," said one of them. "What I have in mind is a *demi-pétillant* with the oysters, a good sparkling *source* with the *quenelles de brochet*, and something from an impeccable cistern, *bien chambré*, with the *coq au vin*."

I took Madeleine's large red hand in mine and looked into her kindly nannie's eyes.

"Tell me the Beaujolais still gushes?" I cried hoarsely.

"*Mon enfant*," she said, "you must be brave. *Le vin fait de l'homme une brute, de la femme une martyre*."

"In all Paris, it can't be got?"

"Over the road," said Madeleine, "is the armoury of M. Duval. He sells reliable weapons, and also cartridges. Anyone who wants to kill himself with wine can buy it, too."

Lunch doesn't last long when you are too dazed to notice what you are eating. Afterwards we tottered out, tripping over a clochard who lay on the hot grating of the *Pierre*, swilling orange-juice from a tin can. Speechless and aimless, we walked. Crossing the Pont Neuf I discovered a piece of paper in my hand which read: "*L'alcool prend*



aux hommes leur argent, leur santé, leur intelligence et leur bonheur." Half-way down the Boulevard des Capucines a little man detached himself from the crowd and sidled up in a familiar way.

"At least one old trade still flourishes," we muttered.

As he opened his coat we started to

chant the British foreign anthem, beginning "We are totally uninterested in photography, however ingenious, of—", when he whipped out a small bottle.

"*Cognac!*" he hissed. "Verra wecked, verri exciting, verri bad for you!"

Jingle of Seasonal Irresponsibility

I WISH they'd pipe down about pipelines,
When the morning is pearly and still;
About limited wars,
Or some idiot clause
In the capital punishment bill.
When a single dew prism's a sonnet
No poet can hope to enshrine,
Who cares about rockets
That clean out our pockets,
Or Whitehall receptions for one Lim Yew Hock?
It's
Quite frankly no business of mine.

I wish they'd shut up about shipyards.
When the blossom is sweet on the tree;
They can brood all they like
Over walk-out and strike
But they needn't expound them to me.

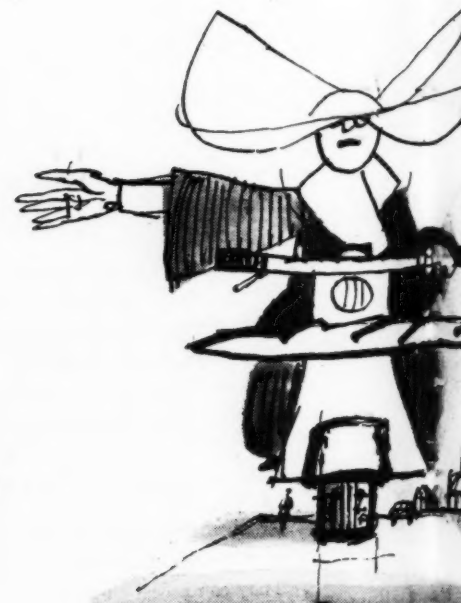
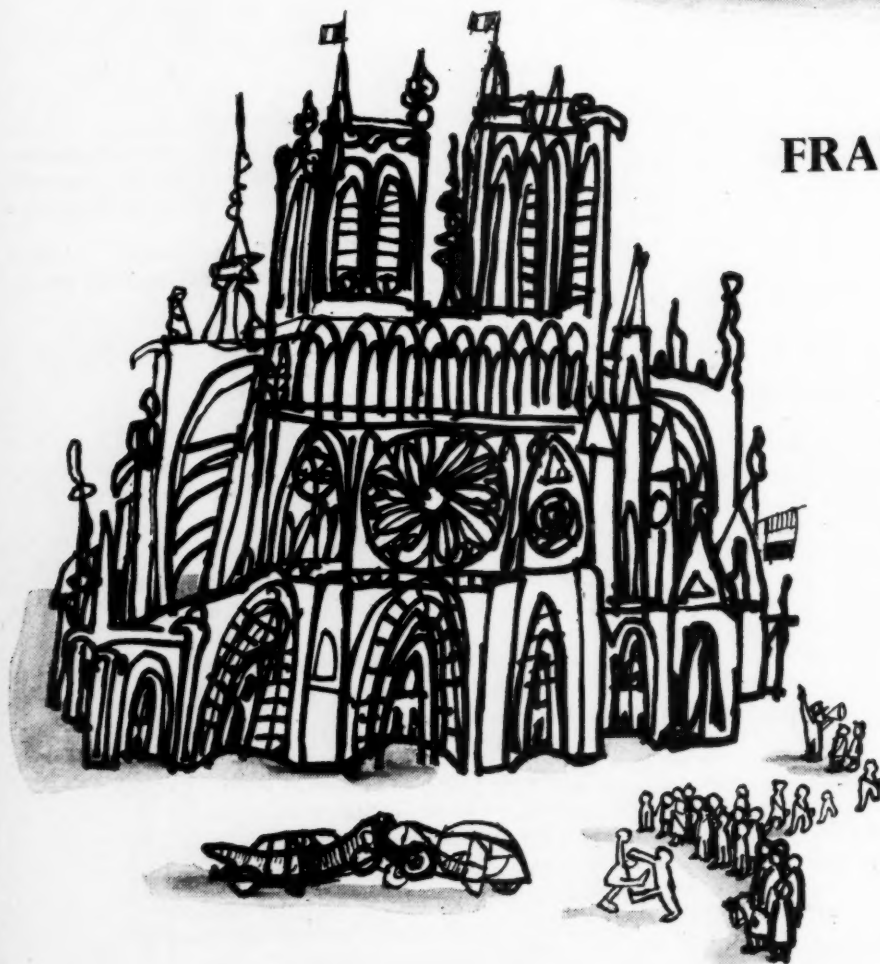
When the hedges are audibly sprouting,
And the primroses pop on their stalks,
It's palpably idle
To worry which side'll
Be served to the greatest advantage by Speidel,
Or What will Emerge from the Talks.

I wish they'd keep mum about Moscow,
I wish they'd be dumb on Ceylon,
Suppress all the news
About Arabs and Jews,
About Togoland, Harwell or Bonn.
When the cuckoo is clearing his larynx
For a premature hey-ding-a-ding,
A conviction internal,
Exclusively vernal,
Insists that though human unwisdom's eternal
There's only one moment of Spring.

J. B. BOOTHROYD



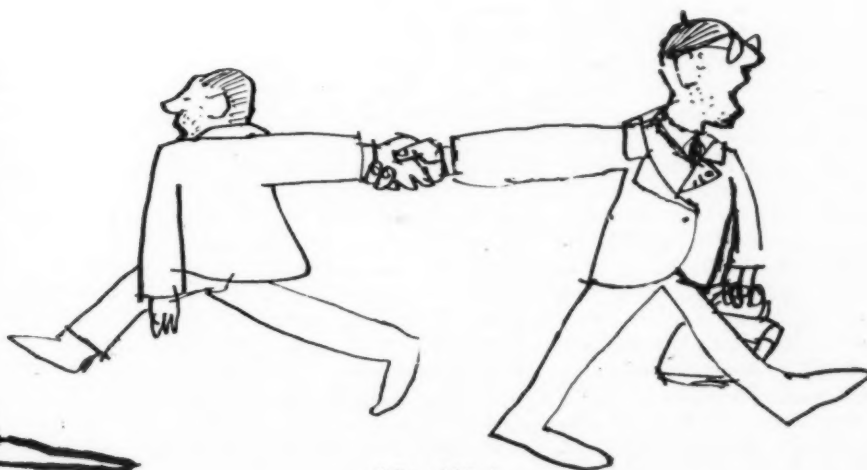
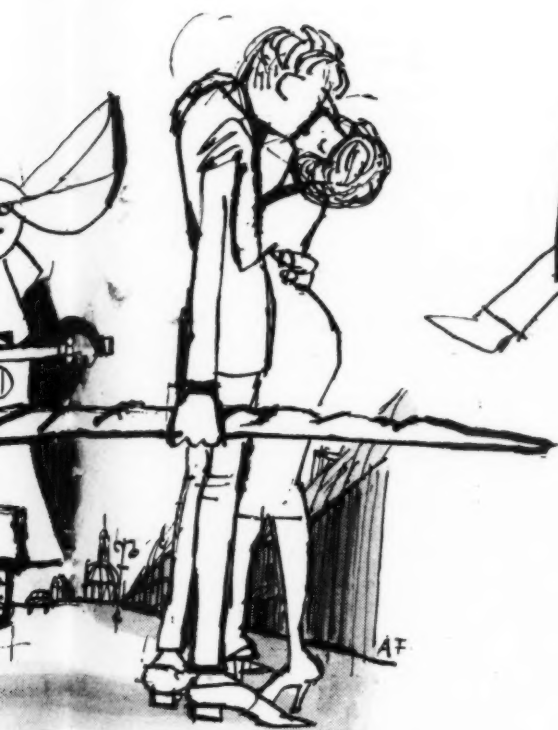
FRANCE à la FRANÇOIS





"Garçon!"

NÇOIS



"Ça va?"
 "Ça va."
 "Ça va?"
 "Ça va."
 "La famille?"
 "Ça va."
 "Les enfants?"
 "Ça va."
 "Et vous?"
 "Ça va."
 "Moi ça va."

André Tanguay



Exchange and Robbery

By MICHAEL CAMPBELL

I ONCE spent the spring and early summer in Paris on an exchange basis. My experience may be useful to parents contemplating something of the sort for their son or daughter, with the season coming on.

I was exchanged for a younger son, Jean-Pierre, who put on a stone during the three months in my Irish home, consuming all the bullocks on the property, and took home an astonishing Irish beauty called Maeve Brannigan who is now his wife and the mother of six children. I, on the other hand, and at the same time, was in Jean-Pierre's home in the Avenue Mozart.

It was a third-floor flat in a grey house—an L-shaped corridor with rooms off it. My room was at the end, furnished with an enormous bed with a patchwork woollen cover on which the tailless cat, Lisette, used to roll sensuously, crying more like a baby than a cat. The window, like all the windows, had thick muslin curtains and we had the electric light on almost all the time.

The sitting-room, which served also as dining-room, was very dark. In the corners were huge wardrobes with apples and grapes carved on them. There was a round table with sea-shells on it for Monsieur Pontet to empty his pipe-ash. The windows were always shut and there was a stale smell.

M. Pontet was very small with a face wrinkled like a monkey's. He wore a

tweed suit and his feet turned outwards to an alarming degree. His wife was taller, with a long nose and red hair piled on top. She was very highly strung. The elder son, André, who was twenty-eight, was a smiling youth with cropped hair who seemed almost mentally deficient.

There was a terrified maid called Julie who served a very simple meal in six separate courses, taking the best part of an hour. At lunch, while Julie put the unchanging bowl of soup in front of us, M. Pontet questioned his wife fiercely on the morning's shopping expenses. Often he found that he had no serviette, raised his voice and started rapping the table. Mme. Pontet seemed not to be interested, though plates and things were spinning about. M. Pontet said very well, he would not eat his soup. André, to my amazement, laughed.

He also put his hand over his mother's, as it lay on the table, played with it, and called her—it was evidently her—"Ta-ta, Ta-ta." She replied, "Don't be silly, André," with shy pleasure. He then made puns, and each time M. Pontet tossed his wizened head, and said "We're being witty now, you see." He seized himself a jug of water, splashed himself a glass and threw it back. At dinner there was one glass of vin ordinaire for the rest of us and three for M. Pontet, but at lunch there was water. The maid served a kernel of

meat, and then three potatoes, and then lettuce, and then one piece of fruit, and then a tiny portion of cheese. Frequently something leaped on the table and went for my plate. It was the cat, brown and furry. Mme. Pontet swept it to the ground with a practised movement, crying out "Lisette! Really!" In the end M. Pontet jumped up with a loud sigh and went and filled his pipe, knocking the shells about on the table.

M. Pontet left *me* quite alone, except that very often when I went to the lavatory he was seized with the same idea. I heard his bouncing feet in the corridor, and then the handle of the door rattled violently. He paused, evidently astounded, and then struck the door twice with his fist, crying "*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" But most of his energy was expended with Mme. Pontet in a salon full of chairs under white dust-covers, an eerie room. Here they screamed at each other, high and long. They did it through the night too, but in their bedroom where they were farther away and not quite so audible. André occasionally crept into my room, made signs, snorted with laughter, and crept out again.

Dinner was the same as lunch, except for the wine. But sometimes we had a lady with black frizzled hair who teased M. Pontet with amazing daring. "Constance, you were always an ignorant woman," he'd retort. She

didn't seem to mind. Always she demanded to see the photographs of Honorine's wedding. (Honorine was the daughter.) There was a whole album. "Such a day! Such a party! A man knelt at her feet and serenaded her with a guitar—who was he, Cecile, who was he?" Mme. Pontet did not know who he was: there were so many people and all so gay. M. Pontet sighed and sprang away to knock his pipe out on the shells. Honorine looked sad in the pictures. Her husband was much older.

André made a few efforts. He took me to things called "surprise parties," which were not surprises at all. There were very young people with crew-cuts, striped socks and thick soled shoes. There was a radiogram and dancing to bebop. Every time I was asked,

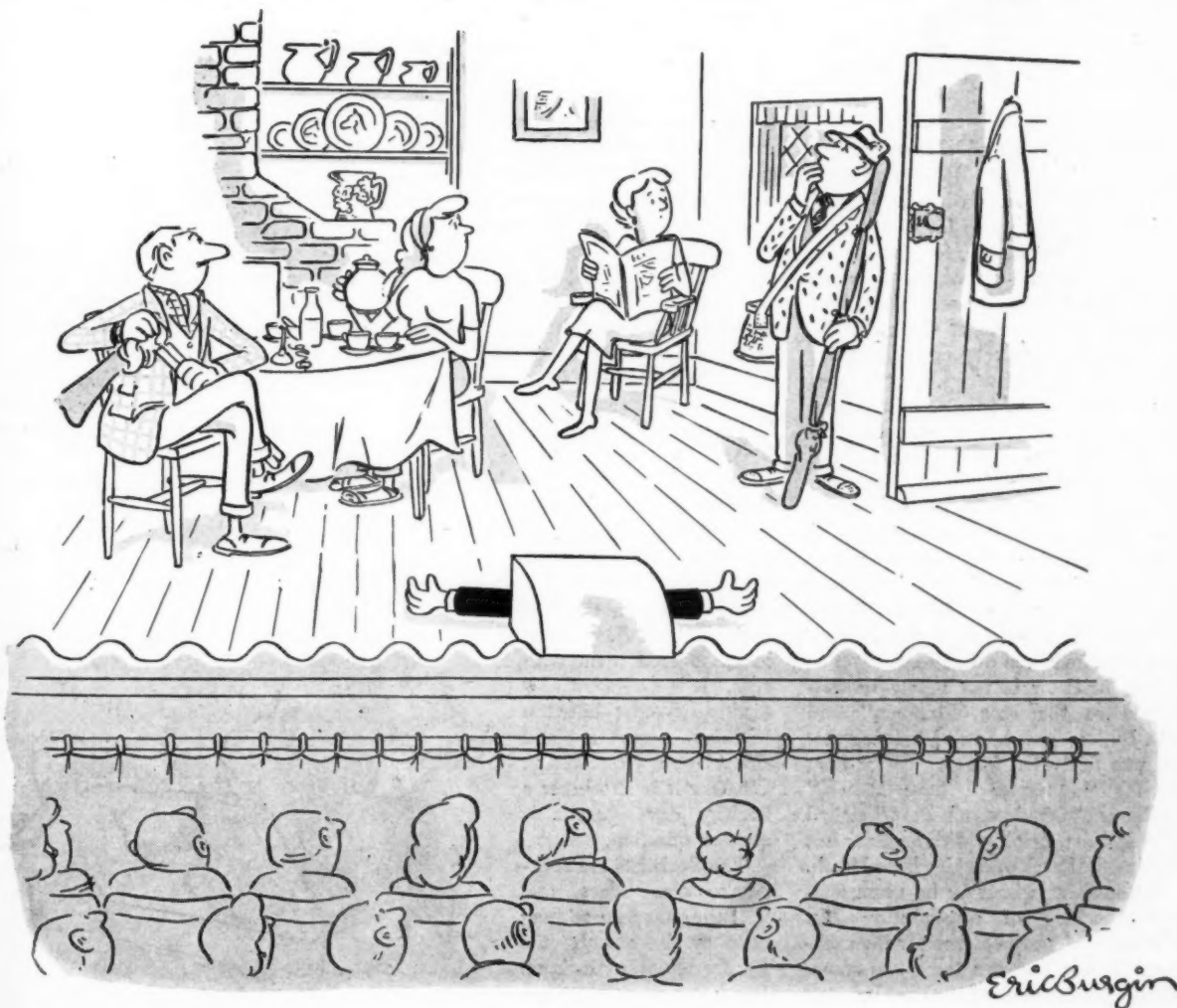
"Est-ce que vous aimez le jazz New Orléans?"—and in the end I took to saying "Non."

This would have been really all, except that after a few weeks I went alone to the pictures one evening and on returning found a crowd in the street, five gendarmes, and the concierge shouting in a pink shift with a white dog yapping at her feet. I thought it had nothing to do with me, and went upstairs. The flat-door was smashed to pieces on the floor, all the wardrobes emptied of the most extraordinary rubbish, and my two suitcases and new typewriter gone. I had to wait for the Pontets' return, as they were visiting relatives. For hours I sat among the rubble while the cat climbed up and down inside the heavy curtains, crying. I didn't know whether I feared most the

possible return of the criminals or the certain return of the Pontets.

Mme. Pontet's jewellery was taken and she made a throttling noise, threw hysterics and passed out. André laughed because they had overlooked his valuable alarm-clock. M. Pontet took me by the lapels, as we stood on top of the smashed door, shook me back and forth, and cried "*Vous avez laissé la porte ouverte!*" Later he maintained that I was responsible because I had brought the suitcases in which the goods were removed. We were visited for the rest of my stay by a young detective in a black shirt and white tie, who shone a torch in my face and grilled me closely, but achieved nothing.

Still, I am happy that Jean-Pierre left home and found his bride.





Mr. Heath,
Government
Chief Whip

FEW things are odder than the way in which Mr. Edward Heath shakes all over when he laughs. It is like a jelly made for Gargantua. There is no one in—or, for the matter of that, out of—Parliament who can touch him there. He easily shakes for England, but one might think that he had not found so very much to shake about over the last weeks. Yet it takes more than by-elections, threatened strikes or the United Nations to get a good Whip down, and there he was shaking as merrily as ever in spite of all. It was Mr. Butler who set him going. Mr. Butler, it must be confessed even at risk of repetition, does say some very curious things these days. Colonel Lipton hoped that the Prime Minister would not be as flat-footed over doctors' pay as he had been over Europe. "The Prime Minister is not nearly so flat-footed as the Hon. Member," said Mr. Butler—as if he was admitting that he was fairly flat-footed. "The least flat-footed Premier I have known," perhaps? "Oh dear, oh dear," sighed Mr. Robens, helpless with laughter but lacking the knack of shaking like a Heath.

Meanwhile, whenever he hears anyone speaking of stag-hunting Mr. Heathcoat Amory reaches for his milk-bar. It was between these two somewhat disparate loves that he was

hunted all Monday, and it was, perhaps, not surprising that on Tuesday he should seek for peace by offering a subsidy to a herring. His offer was good enough for most Members, but it was not good enough for Mr. Hector Hughes, who complained—not once but again and again—that in a race between a bull and a fish the bull would always win. On which does Mr. Hector Hughes—himself, we believe, an amateur jockey in his salad days—intend to ride?

Then on Wednesday there was an admirable and non-contentious debate about prisons—non-contentious, that is to say, except for Mrs. Braddock, who stalked out like an avalanche when they would not let her speak. Whatever Mr. Butler's oddities when he is not being Home Secretary, it is at least certain that he is determined to bring to the Home Office a very different spirit to that which breathed there in the days of his predecessor. Mr. Anthony Greenwood welcomed his speech in the terms of respect that one looks for these days when Conservative Members are speaking about Mr. Aneurin Bevan. Mr. Butler, he said, was of the great lineage of Lord Templewood and Mr. Chuter Ede. (By the way, where was Mr. Chuter Ede, usually the most assiduous of attenders?) Mr. Anthony Greenwood is one of the most charming of the House's Members alike on and off its floor—and one of the most fluent (the two do not always go together). But this day his colleagues behind him seemed determined to pay him a peculiar compliment. Unwilling to wait their own turn to speak, they kept popping up to suggest to him points that he might very well make—much as they say that our popular comedians keep hacks to feed them with gags. It is a pleasant new distinction—that between Members Suggesting and Members Speaking. Whether it is altogether a healthy development is another question.

The Socialists are cock-a-hoop these days, and well they may be so long as they have only the Conservatives to look at. But let them never forget



The Third Man (Sir Hartley Shawcross)

that great saying of de Jouvenel. "When we talk of military efficiency, let us always remember that an army has only another army to fight against." If the Socialists turn and look at themselves the prospect is not so pleasing. Take Monday's Army debate. Mr. Hare, it is true, for the Government had as yet no policy to announce. Mr. Fienburgh, speaking for the first time from the Front Opposition Bench, was fluent and confident and certainly could not be accused of reading, for he did it all without a note. But the fact that the Government had nothing to say only gave all the more time to the Opposition to contradict one another. This they did with a vengeance. Mr. Shinwell



would not have British troops commanded by a German. Then we might as well pack up and scrap N.A.T.O., said Mr. Paget. Mr. Bellenger called on the Government to repudiate Mr. Shinwell. Colonel Wigg said that never again must we dream of "going it alone." Mr. George Brown said that we must have a policy which would enable us if necessary to "go it alone." Mr. Strachey, winding up for the Government, was content partially to disagree with Mr. Denis Healey and Mr. Bellenger in order that he might allow himself time wholly to disagree with Colonel Wigg. It was a lovely shambles, and the Opposition rendered the nation an important public service by thus exposing itself.

And now Sir Hartley Shawcross threatens to pop up as Third Man if only he can get leave to come out of his Shell; and over all these lesser differences there looms the figure of that monstrous, comic crow, Dr. Dalton. Mr. Morrison has but to rise in his place and there is a cry "Is there a doctor in the House?" The Prime Minister, badgered about why there is no doctor on the doctors' pay commission, need but answer "There are some doctors I could think of," and all is smiles. The Conservatives are in a bad way, but no party that has Dr. Dalton against it need ever wholly despair.

The Lords saw a maiden Mills talking about the sites of atomic piles. He did not do too well. Lord Chorley spoke of "England's green and pleasant land," but noble lords are too well bred to make jokes about "dark, satanic Mills." The basic point is: Are these piles dangerous? And if, as Lord Mills says, they are not, why is it necessary to put them in lonely and beautiful places? To these questions Lord Mills had no real answer.

In Parliament itself it was a small week, but over Parliament hung the shadow of greater things but things about which there was nothing very much that Parliament could do. As for ship-building, on Thursday Mr. Macleod made his statement that he had issued invitations for a new meeting, and that was that. There was nothing more for the moment to be said. There was little more to be said about the Middle East. Mr. Selwyn Lloyd claimed—in a manner all too reminis-



Mr. Shinwell

cent of post-Munich Ministers—that the prospects for peace were better and hoped that we would be able to arrange guarantees for the Middle Eastern frontiers. But as all those frontiers have been guaranteed fifty times already without anybody paying any attention, it was not easy to see how it would greatly help to guarantee them the fifty-first time. Mr. Bevan in his turn told us what the United Nations should do to preserve the peace. But what chance is there of the United Nations doing these things with Russia's interest all in favour of keeping matters on the

boil? And he was far from clear what should be the next move if the United Nations should be defied. In contrast with the Front Benchers Captain Waterhouse was at least definite. He would boycott the Canal if the Egyptians insisted on taking all the dues. He also spoke of blockade—which is a very different matter. When Commander Noble came to wind up he said that he "did not disagree greatly with the content" of Captain Waterhouse's speech. Does this mean that a blockade is Government policy? We ought to know. CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS

The Walk from the Station

COMMUTER still but motorist no more,
Homeward along the lane plods Mr. Brown.

Light thickens (he has thought that one before),

And there's the rooky wood, now sinking down
To cold dark Nothing till the rescuing day.
(This wood has got him, through the weeks, that way.)

At Halfway Stump (his name for it) the ditch

Becomes a trickle and a boy's delight;

And Mr. Brown—roused from a dream in which

He starts, as once he thought he should, to write—
Stands, hears, is old; but springtime's getting through
To cry *The world's great age begins anew!*

When you can't see the cow-pats then it's dark.

Ah now, beyond his torch's ring, a *twheet!*

He stares at silence (trust a dog to bark);

No luck; an owl and he will never meet.

So, on and nearly past the milk-churn stand,

Go Mr. Brown and Nature, hand in hand.

Nature, shy mistress, drops him at his gate,

Flees to the stream, the owls, the rooky lair;

While Mr. Brown, her ex-initiate,

Chewing and viewing in his fireside chair,

Speaks once for all the duty walker's mind:

"It does you good, but blimey, it's a grind."

ANGELA MILNE





Automatic Banks

THERE was a time when the banks tied with the churches as havens of peace and ceremonial mental refreshment. They were so cool and dignified. We left the busy, sweating streets and entered a refrigerated sanctuary cut from magnificent mahogany and marble, and automatically our humour and deportment improved. We were members of the finest club in Europe.

The clerks or acolytes were male, pin-striped and respectful. They handled our cheques and our paying-in slips like nuggets of pure gold. They called us "sir," laughed politely and convincingly at our little jokes, and apologized for our carelessness in addition and endorsement. There was one cashier, I remember, who always told me the date and reminded me of my name while with eyes full of sympathy he watched me toiling away at the scrivenly chore of completing a cheque payable to "Self."

But times have changed. The redistribution of the national income has converted the banks into democratic institutions ("If you have TV you need a bank account") and full employment has had a remarkable effect on the quality of their personnel. Bank clerks are now human beings. They no longer call us "sir," and they no longer seem to have time for our jokes. My impression is that they reserve their smiles for the ladies in the background, the female bank clerks whose pretty heads can be seen bobbing about behind the glass partitions, ledgers and calculating machines. But I may be wrong.

The fact is that the banks are busier. Squeeze or no squeeze they are invaded daily by queues of people trying to keep pace with the cost of living, with people paying in as many as five million cheques a day. And in the circumstances it is not really surprising that the banks should now be considering the adoption of mechanical clerks and electronic brains.

But a report recently issued by a

committee of the London clearing banks shows that the banks are by no means all sold on the idea of neotechnic banking, and it seems likely that progress towards automation will be delayed by disagreement over the terms and finances of the necessary research.

It should not be supposed that electronic mechanization would produce a counter revolution, that is, dramatic changes at the cashier's desk. No one has yet suggested that cheques can or should be cashed by slot-machine methods or that the bank manager's sorrowful "No" should be replaced by impersonal tape-recordings. At the moment the chief proposals concern sorting, accounting and centralized book-keeping, all of them back-room operations, and all of them consuming—at present—a formidable number of man-hours in tasks not easily distinguishable



In the Country

Spotting the Sex

AS sex is to the towns, so sexing is to the country: in other words, it's quite an industry. It's amazing how it progresses.

Twenty years ago when I was misled into the poultry world it was necessary for farmers who wanted to rear a hundred pullets to buy a couple of hundred day-old chicks. After going to the expense of rearing these they were able to see within a month how many birds were cocks and how many were hens. And I often had the experience of getting only fifty pullets out of a batch of double that size. There could be no guarantee from the breeders in those days. It was just the same if you had your own incubator and set your own eggs. It was all a matter of luck. Rearing unwanted cockerels until they were three or four weeks old added considerably to the cost of obtaining pullets.

Yet all the time Western poultry keepers were committed to this game of buying-a-pullet-in-a-poke they knew that the Japanese had other methods. But it wasn't until the early 1930s that an English poultry breeder, Mr. W. D. Evans, had the initiative to persuade a

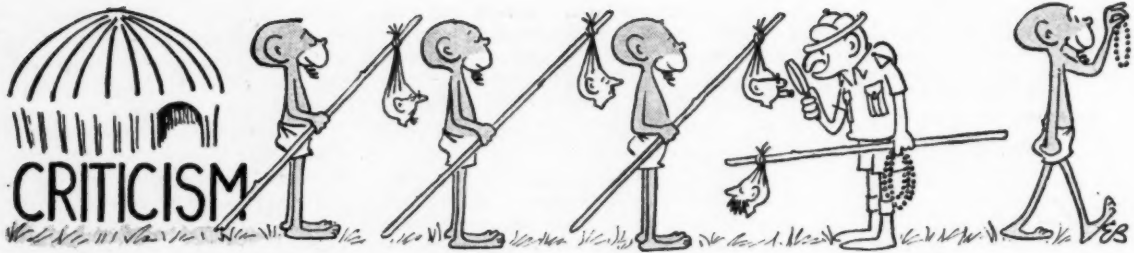
couple of Japanese to come over to this country and part with their secret. They gave a demonstration at Kibworth Hatchery, near Kettering, where they sexed a batch of 10,000 Rhode Island Red chicks as they came from the incubator, and were proved ninety-nine per cent correct when a vet in attendance made a post-mortem examination of the birds. Their secret was their ability to spot a minute distinction between the sexes at birth, which is visible just within the anus of the chick. A quick glance was sufficient; they could sex thousands an hour. The Japs trained a few Englishmen. It is still a highly specialized job. But since then farmers have been able to buy only a hundred chicks when they wanted that number of either pullets or cockerels. Even so, the breeders have had to go on incubating perhaps double that number of eggs, discarding the cockerels at birth.

But it seems there is progress in all things, even in sex. Apparently some American has now found a patent in which he claims that eggs immersed in a particular solution of hormones can be made to hatch all female or male as required. At any rate that is the line of research, even if it is not perfected or on the market. If this succeeds, poultry keepers will no doubt be saved some further expenses. But might this not have implications within the realm of human breeding too? Perhaps it will answer Mr. Thurber's pertinent question, "Is Sex really necessary?" with a hilarious and final negative.

RONALD DUNCAN

MAMMON

* * *



BOOKING OFFICE

Montparnos and Others

From Renoir to Picasso: Artists I Have Known. Michel Georges-Michel. Gollancz, 21/-

THE lightest of light journalism, these memoirs of painters are both enjoyable and in their way instructive. No attempt is made to go beneath the surface; the anecdotes are set pieces; everyone mentioned is credited with the greatest good humour or the most charming cantankerousness. Yet, all the same, almost every artist of any standing of the Paris School during the past sixty years is named and given some sort of intelligible label. I recommend the book to people interested in painting, provided they do not expect too much. It contains fifty drawings of, or by, the artists concerned.

The Paris School is perhaps the most extraordinary intellectual aspect of the first half of this century. Paris, rather than France, produced it, for although a number of its most distinguished painters were French, (Matisse, Braque, Rouault, Marie Laurencin, etc.), Picasso, Modigliani, Chirico, Sert, Soutine, Chagall, Van Dongen, Fujita and a host of other non-Frenchmen (not a few Jewish) played a preponderant part—painters, I hasten to add, of very different achievement, but all part of a remarkable movement in which genius, talent, high spirits, self-advertisement, commercial grasp, and sheer neurosis are often exceedingly difficult to sort out one from the other.

This book begins with brief reminiscences of the Old Guard, stern, unbending Impressionists: Degas (though he abhorred the name "impressionist"), Renoir, Monet; frightening, dedicated old men living apart from the world and practising the mysteries of their art: together with Lautrec whose brilliance fits into no group. Then, suddenly, the scene changes. The Impressionists, for all their revolutionary ardour, belong to the past. A new generation has appeared, which is with us still to this day—although there are signs that it is now breathing its last.

Take Picabia, for example, the founder of "Da-Da":

"I first met Francis Picabia at the time when he was trying to undermine Cubism and foreshadow Surrealism. His work took the form of a vertical black line a quarter of an inch wide and eighteen inches high; to one side of the date 1879 (which had nothing



to do with his birth); and above the vertical line, in capital letters, these words: THE CHILD CARBURETTOR, MY PORTRAIT, THE STATE OF MY SOUL—the whole on white paper in a tin frame."

That was in 1902 at the Salon, then considered "revolutionary." The surprising thing is that fifty-five years later some people can still go scarlet in the face and have Academician's apoplexy when they see that sort of thing. Of course there was an element of ragging in it! Why not? Picabia, an enjoyable if not particularly stupendous figure, is easily assimilated however. It is when someone with the power of Picasso does the same sort of thing that the scene becomes embittered. Picabia, incidentally, constructed faked cemeteries round his country house to force

down the price of adjoining property which he hoped to buy.

Léon Bakst's décor astonished Western Europe when Diaghilev's Russian Ballet made its first appearance; but the unerring instinct of the great impresario showed him a few years later that the old-fashioned, fruity romanticism of Bakst was a thing of the past. New masters must be commissioned. Bakst, heartbroken, was abandoned. His betrayal might make a suitable theme for an opera or ballet of the future. There was a mysterious room in Bakst's house, the door of which was always kept carefully closed. Its secret was revealed only after his death, during his own lying-in-state:

"He must have planned the ceremony carefully in advance. The catafalque had been set up in the middle of the studio, and on each landing was stationed a beadle in full regalia: in fact, the whole get-up of plumed hat, gold-braided coat and halberd looked as if Bakst had specially designed it for the occasion. But the door of the mysterious chamber, whose secret the artist had jealously guarded for so many years, was wide open, and through it could be seen a sort of store-room filled with a clutter of canvases, stretching-frames, paint pots and rags. And that was all!"

The author by no means limits himself to speaking of painters of the "Modern School." He has something to say of Boldini, who so exuberantly portrayed Parisian beauties and men about town not as they are but as they ought to be; and also of Sem, that brilliant caricaturist of whom another artist asserted: "His talent is so great that unless we firmly resist his influence we shall never be able to see a pretty woman except as Sem has depicted her, with all those minor imperfections he can insinuate so subtly."

ANTHONY POWELL

Analysis of Passion

Challenge to Venus. Charles Morgan. Macmillan, 15/-

Mr. Morgan's new novel tells of a brief affair between an Englishman,

Martin, and an Italian beauty of ancient family.

Martin is a gentle giant of mystical tendencies that have no direct bearing on the story. The girl, Fiammetta (a widow), while not in love with Martin, is willing to consummate the physical passion he rouses in her. He, en route to an appointment in Aden, can snatch only a few days of bliss; the prospect of losing him at last brings Fiammetta to contemplate an unsuitable marriage with him. She does not contemplate it for long. Believing she would lose her identity once she left her family and setting, her good sense prevails, depressingly, at the last moment. Martin must continue his journey alone.

There is little in the characterization or background of this story to compensate for its thinness. Martin, Fiammetta and the handful of people about them have little separate existence. The Italian atmosphere is ponderously described. What Mr. Morgan does provide is a wealth of stilted, philosophical conversations about the nature of passion. If such appeal to you, then *Challenge to Venus* is your book. O. M.

Mermaids and Mastodons. Richard Carrington. *Chatto and Windus*, 25/-

Painful as it is to learn from Mr. Carrington that the mermaid owed everything to the sea-cow, a vast flippered vegetarian with a notoriously vacant face, he lets us down gently; he even admits, Loch Ness aside, that the sea-serpent is by no means wholly explained. This entertaining book, packed with curious information, treats sympathetically the origins of legendary beasts, and tells the exciting detective story of the discovery of long extinct species, of which the most spectacular were the mammoths preserved for 25,000 years in the Siberian refrigerator. The final sections deal with ancient creatures undoubtedly surprised to have survived (such as the kangaroo and celacanth), and with those which have lately become extinct, mostly through human rapacity.

Although a devoted naturalist, Mr. Carrington writes unsolemnly and is as quick as we are to laugh at the pretensions of pundits. He is generous with illustrations, and with a bibliography as long as a dinosaur. E. O. D. K.

"Essayez." The Marquess of Zetland. *John Murray*, 28/-

Lord Zetland's upbringing was sporting and he confesses his love of reading rather shyly; on a camel tour from Constantinople to Pekin he took *A Thousand and One Gems of English Poetry*. His style ranges from "I fear, indeed, that in my own case to speak of pursuing my studies was something of a misnomer," to "Curzon scintillated like a chameleon." Perhaps a year in some intellectually enterprising and socially irreverent environment, like an art school, would have put edge and polish on his talents.

He saw, what some better-trained minds did not see, the need for studying the psychological as well as the economic roots of Indian nationalism; and his trilogy on Indian religions won him an F.B.A. He forced an indifferent Cabinet to see the connection between British policies in Palestine and in India. He spotted early on that the threat to Federation would come from the Moslems rather than Congress, and he made the Indian universities face their neglect of Indian culture. Though this is sometimes a silly book, the man behind it is impressive. R. G. G. P.

English Historical Research in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries. Edited by Len Fox. Dugdale Society. O.U.P., 21/-

This collection of essays celebrates the three hundredth anniversary of the publication in 1656 of Sir William Dugdale's *Antiquities of Warwickshire*. A great deal of interesting information about the period is brought together here by various distinguished hands, so that it seems almost invidious to mention one name more than another. However, Professor Stuart Piggott's *Antiquarian Thought* and Mr. Michael MacLagan's *Genealogy and Heraldry* cover some of the lesser known aspects with great address. We see here the gradual development from the mediaeval approach, when some mammoth's bones found on the Essex coast were quite naturally considered to be the teeth of one of the giants who traditionally inhabited this country in antediluvian times. A. P.

Freddy Lonsdale. Frances Donaldson. *Heinemann*, 21/-

Lonsdale warned his eldest daughter that if she tackled his Life she must tell the truth. She has certainly done so. Some will be shocked by her complete honesty; others may feel, as I do, that this is a far more durable portrait than one tied up in blue ribbon, and Lonsdale himself would have been the first to be affected by the poignancy of the last three lines of her introduction.

The son of a Jersey tobacconist, at forty he vied with Maugham as the most popular playwright in London. He remained totally uneducated, but men like Wells and Bennett found him enchanting company. He was gregarious, generous and affectionate; selfish, unpredictable and a hypochondriac who wore white socks as a precaution against dye-poisoning. Yet his friends loved him. Having secured his family, he spent a great fortune in an unavailing flight from boredom. If Mrs. Donaldson rates his work a little high, he was at least a master of light comedy. E. O. D. K.

Mr. and Mrs. Daventry. Frank Harris. *Richards Press*, 8/6

Although this passionate drama had a good run (with Mrs. Pat in the lead), it was never published; Mr. H. Montgomery



"But all the old things are back, dear—cloche hats, the Charleston, fringes, De Valera."

Hyde, who recently found a script, prefaces this edition with an interesting account of the play's squalid history. Harris bought the scenario, with a promise of the first act, from Wilde when the latter fled to Paris. In the end he wrote the whole piece himself, to be dunned not only by Wilde but by all the others, including Tree and Alexander, to whom the scenario had also been sold. Wilde based his last play, *Constance*, on the same scenario, and added insult to injury by ragging Harris for buying Lady Teazle's screen scene.

The play is sub-Wilde and very faded, though it shows Harris to have had a strong sense of theatre. It is easy to see why most of the critics were horrified by its boldness, less easy to understand why Max and Grein went to town in its praise. E. O. D. K.

The Enemy in the Heart. T. H. Jones. *Hart-Davis*, 10/6

The fifty-three poems in this volume are very varied; the tone ranges from Dylan Thomas to Wallace Stevens (of both of whom there are explicit pastiches, the latter excellent) and the quality varies a lot too. The Thomist stuff has the by now traditional turn of phrase and line, but does not lie so thick on the ground as some of the Master's; it is mostly about boyhood in Wales. The middle section of the book contains flat-toned closely-cogitated poems analysing such things as the effect of time on personality and the decay of love; several of them seemed to me excellent; some are not difficult in the usual way of being

obscurely phrased but through a tendency to split tenuous hairs of character or motive. The other main section is of songs, mostly not very singable, some in the manner of Day Lewis or MacNeice.

P. D.

AT THE PLAY



La Parisienne (PALACE)
The Iron Duchess (CAMBRIDGE)
Olive Ogilvie (ALDWYCH)
The Wit to Woo (THE ARTS)

IN *La Parisienne* Edwige Feuillère gives a dazzling account of a spoilt woman of the 1880s who manages her futile, adoring husband and her succession of lovers with a cool, almost motherly, skill. From Henri Becque's ironic comedy stems much of the modern French triangle drama; its mechanism is so polished that, although little of it can now seem new, it is still amusing and sharply pointed in a production as good as this, by Michel Vitold. Clotilde and her principal lover are conventional to the edge of prudery; she is an attentive wife, and yet has no morals at all in her masterly handling of men.

Exquisitely dressed and buoyantly at home in a bustle, Mme. Feuillère has a far better chance to demonstrate the delicacy and poise of her acting than she could ever have in that old bag of phoney tricks, *La Dame aux Camélias*. *La Parisienne* is an extremely exacting comedy, and she meets its requirements beautifully. In *La Dame* neither Bernard Noël nor Charles Nissar, her chief actors, were particularly exciting; here, as husband and lover, their individual contributions count for much. As a curtain-dropper, rather long-drawn-out but fairly gay, Mme. Feuillère adds *Le Carrosse du Saint-Sacrement*, a squib by Prosper Mérimée on the extraction of an official coach from the Governor of Peru by his exotic mistress, who presents it to the bishop and finds herself halfway to heaven.

From the tetchy nobleman with the fly-rod to the twittering housemaid the gallery of William Douglas Home's caricatures is fairly constant. In *The Iron Duchess*, which he calls an extravaganza, he forces them into a double plot that becomes increasingly difficult to manage. On the one hand, the pompous

colonial secretary, staying at the castle, is sternly facing a crisis in a rebellious British dependency; on the other, the cook at the castle has electrified it by a similar declaration of freedom. Developments run parallel, and as things hot up in Gimalta so they do also for a house-party menaced by a berserk matron armed with a rifle and a bottle of gin; until in the end the duchess, a woman of parts, solves both problems in an outrageously high-handed way. Luckily the duchess is Athene Seyler; and although the parallels grow very thin, and the play drops at times into desperate farce, her bustling and splendid personality carries the evening. It is not a very witty comedy, but as always Mr. Douglas Home hits an authentic note in both the waffle of politics and the harassed life of great houses, and his situations are lively enough to give good opportunities to a nimble cast. Ronald Squire is in fine form as the pottering duke, and David Hutcheson as his political son and Olaf Pooley, as the Gimaltan minister who stays to fish in these troubled waters, are sterling props, with William Mervyn booming richly and Gladys Henson well qualified for single-handed rebellion.

Olive Ogilvie, by Henry Denker, must have seemed much funnier in New York, where acting methods based on Stanislavsky's oracular pronouncements are taken very seriously, the devout initiate cudgelling himself into a creative mood before spending six instructive months in learning to turn a door-handle. Unfortunately the joke is professional and local, and for London the result is a very slow comedy without enough wit to bridge the gulf. Yolande Donlan, who can be a deadly satirist of drawling blondes, plays an uncommonly honest film star who escapes from Hollywood to start from the bottom of New York's stage ladder; and though this theme raises hope, the author changes gear fatally and expects us to be sorry for her when she fails—which is a waste of Miss Donlan's charming acids. On the way are two happy interludes in Ronald Radd's anarchist playwright and Harold Lang's solemn student of naturalistic behaviour, but Phil Brown, John Justin and others have to work too hard in loyal pursuit of an absent sparkle.

Much as I like Gothic lunacy, Mervyn Peake's *The Wit to Woo* is altogether too wild, shedding what little pattern it has in such determined snares for laughter as a top-hatted old ruffian lowered in his bed, and an amorous hero seeking refuge in a suit of armour. More the pity, for it starts very well, with four garrulous undertakers arriving for a coffin which is stuffed with Scott and Trollope, the hero having faked his suicide to sadden a girl to whom he is too shy to propose. The piece may be disjointed, but it shows imagination, and though the language is sub-Fry it pulls off now and then a notable phrase; Mr. Peake should have a much better play in him. As the lovers Colin Gordon and Zena Walker tilt with resource, while George Howe and Wensley Pithey meet a much sterner assignment as two rather tedious, old men. The performance that scores most, before being starved, is Kenneth Williams' impish and abominable secretary.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

Antony and Cleopatra (OLD VIC—13/3/57), honest Bard. *At the Drop of a Hat* (FORTUNE—16/1/57), London's new after-dinner farrago. *These Foolish Kings* (VICTORIA PALACE—2/1/57), the Crazy Gang. ERIC KEOWN

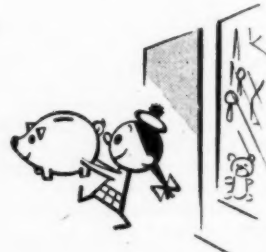
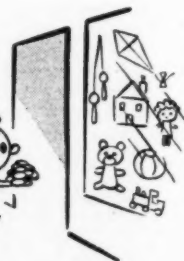


AT THE BALLET

Les Patineurs—Checkmate
(COVENT GARDEN).

TWO of the one-act ballets which would have been seen in Moscow were last week done at the Royal Opera House with important changes.

Les Patineurs, which so greatly pleased Mr. Bulgavin at Covent Garden, would have pleased even more in the Bolshoi Theatre, for Mr. Ashton in expanding his work to suit the larger stage has taken the simple course of doubling some of its most exhilarating effects. The trellised arcade no longer bounds the skaters' arena but, rather oddly, bisects it. This device, with a diminishing perspective of Chinese lanterns, adds to the romantic atmosphere. It also allows the *corps de ballet* to be doubled, the



ROY DAVIS

other half being seen beyond the arches of the trellis.

Similarly, the *pas de deux* for the maroon-dressed girls is now *pas de quatre* in which Brenda Taylor, Valerie Taylor, Meriel Evans and Mary Drage were a charmingly matched and vivacious team.

Rowena Jackson, still absent because of sickness, is in the fullest sense irreplaceable. Her part was taken by Annette Page who, without attempting to emulate the dazzling virtuosity of Miss Jackson, gave a delightful performance of simplified excellence.

Brian Shaw, Shirley Grahame and Anya Linden were the principal members of a cast which contained several newcomers all of whom had caught the wit and style of this essentially stylish ballet.

Checkmate, Dame Ninette de Valois's chessboard ballet, had Svetlana Beriosova in the place of Beryl Grey as the ruthless Black Queen. Seeing in the role a dancer who is unsurpassed in lyrical, yielding and poetic interpretations one realized how important an asset is Miss Grey's regal stature. She had made the part so peculiarly her own that despite the loveliness of Miss Beriosova's dancing it was difficult to suppress thoughts of miscasting.

C. B. MORTLOCK



Vincent Van Gogh—KIRK DOUGLAS

[Lust for Life



AT THE PICTURES

Lust for Life
Doctor at Large

SOMEHOW or other, from hints over a long period, I had been expecting great things of the film about Van Gogh, *Lust for Life* (Director: Vincente Minnelli); and in fact it does, although uneven, prove to be easily the most interesting and worth-while film of the week.

Visually (CinemaScope Metrocolor photography: F. A. Young and Russell Harlan) it is very pleasing indeed throughout, and this of course is as it should be. Great trouble has obviously been taken to "set up" innumerable scenes to look like Van Gogh subjects, and with extraordinary success. Sometimes they emphasise the point by displaying the picture, or the nearly-finished picture, in front of what appears to be the original scene: for instance we see him suddenly slash in those ravens as they appear above the cornfield. But even without this, again and again one is reminded by lighting and colouring that here is a quite obvious Van Gogh, whether one knows it or not. The *personal* likenesses too are astonishingly effective. Here again the people are often carefully posed at precisely the angle of some portrait already known—or now shown—to us; but from the central figure down to the splay-bearded postman Roulin and the woman in "The Potato Eaters" we are constantly seeing resemblances that are very much more than reminders.

Much criticism has concentrated on the question of accents, and they are admittedly distracting. We have no real

justification for objecting to the American accent; once the principle of translated dialogue is accepted at all, Americans have just as much right to object to the English accent. What is disconcerting here is the mixture: Vincent Van Gogh himself (Kirk Douglas) sounds American, but his brother Theo (James Donald) sounds English, and it is Theo's voice that reads the passages from Vincent's letters that hold the episodes of the story together. Again, Gauguin (Anthony Quinn—also visually very like) is American, but Vincent's mistress and housekeeper (Pamela Brown) is English. This kind of irrelevant division recurs; and yet it doesn't seem to matter much when one considers the superlative visual quality of the film as a whole. It was worth doing, and it is very well indeed worth seeing.

It would really have been more justifiable to lead this week's article with *Doctor at Large* (Director: Ralph Thomas), for this is undeniably more enjoyable to more people and, in its way, more consistently successful in what it sets out to do. But there are two points that relegate it: first, it is a second sequel, aiming for the third time at a target profitably hit twice before; and second, it is, like *Brothers in Law* last week, essentially a string of character-sketches, held together by hardly more than the fact that most of them are as it were in a young doctor's consulting-room queue.

Comparisons at a distance of years are deceptive, but I would say that this is considerably better than the second of the three, *Doctor at Sea*. It is certainly more handsomely "mounted"; this has

Eastman Colour and VistaVision, and much of it is unexpectedly attractive pictorially (photography: Ernest Steward). Chief characters are as before: Dirk Bogarde is young Dr. Simon Sparrow, Donald Sinden is his raffish friend Benskin, Muriel Pavlow is the pretty girl friend, James Robertson Justice is the bear-like but golden-hearted Sir Lancelot at St. Swithin's Hospital. We meet the new people as Simon meets them: his successive partners, the mean country doctor (Lionel Jeffries) and the professionally unctuous Park Lane doctor (Patrick Barr), and others including a very miscellaneous lot of patients. Nearly all these small parts down to the tiniest (there are something like thirty of them) are admirably taken, often funny; and one or two—e.g. Maureen Pryor as a worried young woman facing an operation—introduce a note of quite moving seriousness. Yes, even though it is only the mixture as before, it remains richly entertaining.

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Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

In London: *La Traversée de Paris* (27/2/57), and the glossy but quite rewarding *Anastasia* (6/3/57), and the very gay *Brothers in Law* (13/3/57), and good old *War and Peace* (28/11/56).

Of the new releases, the only one noticed here was *The Rainmaker* (20/2/57), well worth seeing. Don't forget the earlier ones *The Silent World* (12/12/56), Hitchcock's *The Wrong Man* (6/3/57), and *The Passionate Stranger* (27/2/57).

RICHARD MALLETT

AT THE THEATRE IN PARIS

La Chatte sur un Toit Brûlant (THÉÂTRE ANTOINE)—*La Mamma* (THÉÂTRE DE LA MADELEINE)—*Patate* (THÉÂTRE SAINT-GEORGES)—*L'Oeuf* (THÉÂTRE DE L'ATELIER)—*Une Femme Trop Honnête* (THÉÂTRE EDOUARD VII)—*L'Equipage au Complet* (COMÉDIE DE PARIS)—*Irma la Douce* (THÉÂTRE GRAMONT)—*25 Ans de Bonheur* (THÉÂTRE DU PALAIS-ROYAL).

THE French critics, who believed they knew the facts of life from most angles, find themselves bewildered by the latest reflections of American civilization. In the past few months they have certainly had a basinful, poor fellows: an adaptation of Erskine Caldwell's novel, *God's Little Acre*, then *Tea and Sympathy*, and now *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (translated by Obey). Is the whole American theatre, they ask numbly, obsessed by the erotic and hysterical? Not that they dislike sex; what they cannot understand is the American passion for abnormality among the inarticulate.

An alternative title for the *Cat* would have been *No Space for Incest*, for when Tennessee Williams had finished with it there was only standing-room for the vices. His comprehensive agenda of frailty and discomfort includes lust, sexual frustration, perversion, cancer, dipsomania, lameness, greed, seduction, thunder, lightning, disgust and heat. All these can scarcely fail to add up to what is often loosely called a strong play, as vitriol and bilgewater could be called a strong drink. Unless you are a professional libido-diviner Mr. Williams' characters, with one exception, are such monotonous bores, moaning away about themselves under the southern sun, that for self-preservation laughter becomes essential.

Our host, a millionaire, is dying of cancer, but doesn't know it. His son

Brick is drinking himself silly to forget the death of a dear friend, who had tried to make love to Brick's wife to prove there was nothing wrong with the friendship.

animal as the Cat, and Paul Guers gulps whisky, bumps about on his crutch and flounders from bed to bed with competent self-torture; but the performance that matters comes from Antoine Balpetré as the father.

In reaction to this massed invasion of "problèmes américano-sexuels" André Roussin announced that he would try the same game in a Sicilian setting, and we were lucky to get to the first night of *La Mamma*, which is taken from a novel by Vitaliano Brancati. The play is said to be rather indecent, but it is also extremely funny and superbly acted. In its treatment of a dynamic matriarch it is not far from a Latin *Mrs. Gibbons' Boys*; only here the trouble is not crime but marital incapacity. Mamma, a human power-station and a darling, takes charge. She prays outrageously to heaven, invokes the guiding spirit of papa, informs the disgruntled priest that he can't have chastity both ways, and conceives a plan too monstrous to be easily described. The result is earthy and witty, and goes off, rocketwise, in a series of explosions in which morals are completely forgotten. Roussin has seen to his own production, and, apart from one character having the same magazine in his pocket for two years, very well; the feeling of a Sicilian village is terrific. But I can't imagine an English version of *La Mamma*, for the



[*La Chatte sur un Toit Brûlant*

Margaret—JEANNE MOREAU

This wife, the Cat, is endeavouring, in an infinitely long strip-tease series, to persuade her husband to sleep with her again. Brick's brother, a slick lawyer, is doing his ugly best to snatch the inheritance, while his mother, an unseemly old floozy, is coyly set to rekindle the waning affections of her sick husband. Imagine this sultry rigmorole laced with whisky, shouting, sobbing, cursing, grunting and wheedling, and understand why Paris raised its eyebrows. When I read the play the scene in which Brick and his father talk frankly appeared the best, and so it is on the stage. The father is a horrible old man, discursive about his wife in bed, but at least he is real and slightly pathetic; when Brick blurts out that he is dying we are nearest to being touched. The last act, stiffened by a gigantic thunderstorm, becomes an orgy of greed. To inherit, Brick must have a child. His wife bluffs, and as the curtain goes down the bluff seems about to be substantiated. A pretty idea.

Our Peter Brook has turned on the heat most faithfully (and designed a suitable bedroom for such frolics), but even he can't magic any genuine depth into the play. Jeanne Moreau is stridently



Rollo—PIERRE DUX

[*Patate*



[*La Mamma*

Rosaria—ELVIRE POPESCO



Magis—JACQUES DUBY

(L'Oeuf

acting develops a southern fire quite alien to our stage. Elvire Popesco has the power of a bulldozer; Jacques Toja, as the elder son, is like a pale atomic squib, and the cynical old uncle is marvellously played by Paul Oetly.

Going round the exhibition of Daumier, I was struck by the caption "Un ami est un crocodile donné par la civilisation." This is the theme of Marcel Achard's very popular new comedy, *Patate*. A study of hate-affection, it is about an ineffective inventor patronized since childhood by a friend who can do everything better; at last he is given a chance to humiliate this sleek monster, only to find in his saddest moment that his friend's dignity is impregnable. It makes a neatly turned comedy that asks much of the delicacy of its actors; its small company is excellent, and the long duel between Pierre Dux and Maurice Teynac a brilliant exploration of the dustier corners of an old friendship. M. Dux produced, and his sympathetic handling has made the name of a very young actress ring round Paris: Sophie Daumier (Honoré's great-grand-daughter?), who plays a wide-eyed child terrifyingly old in the ways of the world.

The other outright winner is *L'Oeuf*, by Félicien Marceau, in which Jacques Duby, the highly original comedian of *Les Oiseaux de Lune* last year, excels himself. In no fewer than twenty scenes we are given the hilarious autobiography of a young man who finds the world

closed against him, like an egg. He describes and demonstrates how gradually he became aware of the intricate system by which the human race overcomes the appalling obstacles strewn in its path; until at length he is so far inside the egg that he can shoot his wife's lover and get away with it. Duby's performance is so good that it seems easy. He is a natural comic, with a squeaky adolescent voice and an air of artful innocence. The awful family gatherings he has to suffer might have been arranged by a French Giles.

Salacrou has evidently struck a bad patch. His new comedy, *Une Femme Trop Honnête*, is no more interesting than his last, *Le Miroir*. Out of a wife planning to murder her husband, because she has been unfaithful and still loves him, he has tried to find something new to say about fidelity; but the piece is thin and implausible, and in a dull production its elaborations grow tedious. For me the only pleasure lay in three players who are always a delight to watch: Jeanne Fusier-Gir, who specializes in crazy, whinnying old women; Maxime-Fabert, constantly surprised by his own eyebrows, and Jacques Jouanneau, a young comedian who has reduced shambling to a fine art.

Although twenty-one new productions came on in January, serious plays by French authors are still missing. Among the very few is *L'Equipage au Complet*, by Robert Mallet, a war drama set in a British cruiser whose captain is trying desperately to extract from two captured



(25 Ans de Bonheur

Monsieur Castille—ARMAND BERNARD



(Irma la Douce

Irma la Douce—COLETTE RENARD

Italian frogmen details of the mine they are believed to have attached to his ship. As they won't talk, he keeps them in the ammunition hold under interrogation, and refuses admission to the doctor and padre, although one of the men is dying. In the end the ship is abandoned, but the real conflict lies in the conscience of the captain. This is an honest play, quietly produced; so quietly, indeed, that one feels no anxiety about blowing up. It gives the Royal Navy little cause for complaint, except perhaps that the officers wear rosettes on their ribbons; but in such an emergency do captains really argue the morality of their actions with mere lieutenants?

I intended to write much more in praise of *Irma la Douce*, an endearing little musical vaguely, but far more innocently, in the school of Runyon. Alexandre Breffort, the ex-taxi-driver, has written an amusing book and Marguerite Monnot a delightful score, which revolve round the adventures of a simple-hearted cocotte and her lover, played winningly by Colette Renard and Michel Roux. Very light, and certainly recommended.

The Palais-Royal, most beautiful of small theatres, having just made a great fuss about the symbolical ejection of its traditional bed, we felt bound to investigate, and in *25 Ans de Bonheur*, by Germaine Lefrancq, found the nearest thing imaginable to Aldwych farce in France. None of it is very new, but the ball is passed smartly round a team expert in this sort of fooling. ERIC KEOWN



ON THE AIR

From Cuckoos to Clowns

IN March, April and the first week of May Wembley floats into range of the TV cameras like a helicopter on a mission of mercy. After a winter of stuffy entertainment, endless interviews, canned "quickies" and giggling panelists, television stretches itself, gulps down the ozone and is reinvigorated. Women's hockey, schoolboy's soccer, the F.A. Amateur Cup, the Rugby League Cup... the Cup Final. Suddenly it is spring again.

I now regard the women's hockey international at Wembley as more significant than the return of the cuckoo. As I take my place in the stand—just behind the cameramen—the sap begins to rise and buds of awareness and optimism burst through my thick winter hide of stupefaction. I have never played hockey and I do not understand its finer points, but the England v. Ireland match, a thriller if ever I saw one, had me airing my views on the game as enthusiastically as Marjorie Pollard. There was so much to admire: the efficient collaboration between the schools and various transport authorities, the fifty-thousand "gate" of cheering girls, the deportment of the players, a first-rate commentary by Peter West (his favourite ejaculation, "My hat!" has never seemed more suitable) and the smooth efficiency of the camera team. On my screen the Wembley turf looked wonderfully green.

"This Week" is a commercial version of the B.B.C.'s "Panorama," and worth seeing. It still has a long way to go before it can match Richard Dimbleby's window



FRANCIS WILLIAMS

[Press Conference]
LORD HAILSHAM

on the world for polish and patina, but it is brisk, bright, fiercely controversial and improving. "Panorama," on the other hand, is losing its touch. Inevitably there are times when the programme's team of interviewers seems too predictable in word and expression to be interesting, when the tense fact-finding antics of Aidan Crawley and Christopher Chataway and the casual intellectual browsing of Woodrow Wyatt and others becomes wearisome and dull. The team is a good one, but it is stale. Reserves are urgently needed.

"This Week" offers some relief from Dimbleby's masterly all-purpose grin, his trick of suggesting urgency by a gasping intake of breath (Jeanne Heal is another clever exponent of this elocutionary gambit), and his careful confiscation of pens and pencils as the lights begin to fade. Michael Westmore's idiosyncrasies are not yet obvious enough to annoy, and his reporters and

interviewers, less certain of their place in the team than Dimbleby's lot, seem to play much harder. The chief weakness of this Associated-Rediffusion effort in "balance" (the commercial code-word for anything vaguely cerebral) is that its assignments are handled superficially and inadequately. My impression is that the whole thing is worked on a shoe-string.

The verdict on Lord Hailsham's "Press Conference" must be "only what was to be expected." He has been at the Ministry of Education for no more than a few weeks, and it would have been wiser and kinder surely to postpone this inquisition until he has completed his prep. Most of his answers were marvels of verbal procrastination. "If

you want my answer to that question, if you want my *honest* answer, I should say that, well, as I said at the beginning in reply to your question, Williams—or was it yours, Curran?—as I see it the situation we now have to face, to be perfectly honest..." Very much like that. Anyway, I learned nothing whatever about the Government's plans for education and became convinced that frequent appearances in the B.B.C.'s "In the News," "Any Questions?" and overseas broadcasts do not necessarily constitute an ideal training for ministerial office.

I saw only the last half of Jack Hylton's presentation of "The Robert Dhéry Show" (I.T.A.), and then kicked myself for wasting fifteen minutes the night before on the B.B.C.'s production of "Getting Married." The dancing and mime in this French farce were quite brilliant. "Getting Married" was dreadful, through no fault but Shaw's.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD



DOUGLAS

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